

PRESS RELEASE
AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHY
BY QUEER ARTISTS FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND SUSSEX
THIS KIND OF LIGHT
10 FEBRUARY – 2 MARCH 2024
OPENING WEEKEND: 2pm to 6pm SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 10, 11 FEBRUARY
KOOP PROJECTS, BRIGHTON, UNITED KINGDOM
93, ST GEORGE'S ROAD, BRIGHTON BN2 1EE



Images: Siyasebenza (top left) by Nonzuzu Gxekwa; We are.. (top right) by Troye Alexander Shannon and Itoro (bottom) by Thembela Dick

KOOP PROJECTS is pleased to announce a group exhibition of Photography by queer artists from South Africa and Sussex. A first of its kind in Brighton, the city at the centre of LGBTQ+ culture in the United Kingdom, the exhibition brings together six compelling artists to tell stories of queer life - written in photographs. South Africans Nonzuzu Gxekwa, Thembela Dick, Kwakohuhle Phakathi and Troye Alexander Shannon meet Sussex-based Soham Joshi and Kobi Orion in a celebratory visual conversation for LGBTQ+ history month. This Kind Of Light is an exhibition for exploration and discovery: places, faces and bodies in a search for identity and belonging; boundaries, both psychological and geographical uncovered; new and significant voices working in Photography found.

The title of the exhibition is taken from an interview with the Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera. Vera, who died in 2005 of AIDS related meningitis was engaged throughout her life with issues around identity and gender and addressed many taboo subjects in her work. Of her writing practice she said “Writing is light, a radiance that captures everything in a fine profile. This light searches and illuminates, it is a safe place from which to uncover the emotional havoc of our experience. Light is a bright warmth which heals. Writing can be this kind of light. Within it I do not hide. I travel bravely beyond that light into the shadows that [it] creates and in that darkness it is also possible to be free..”

These six photographers are also engaged in the practice of writing with light. The selection of photographs cuts across studio portraits, fashion, street photography, documentary and experimental work focused on technique and process. Themes and subjects in the work are centred around ideas of self and place and around matters of light and shadow. Nonzuzo Gxekwa’s cinematic dramas capture singular moments in the light filled streets of Johannesburg, Kwazakuhle’s blurred images of faces and bodies in South African townships appear to be lit by flames; Troye Shannon’s eye is drawn to the dark corners of nightclubs and the stark white light around a bloodied bathroom sink; soft light infuses the internal psychological drama in Thembela Dick’s intimate images. Skin is touched, bodies exposed, a gaze returned. Light is also *not present* in a series of film negatives describing the positive and negative condition of outsider-ness in Soham Joshi’s set of tiny images.

THIS KIND OF LIGHT opens on 10 February and runs until the 3rd March 2024.

A not on framing: Part of our stated aim at Koop Projects is to explore and learn from the contexts in which artists in Africa find ways to make and show their work. For this reason, almost all of the photographs in this exhibition are presented deliberately, defiantly, unframed. For the sake of a frame and some glass, the work in the exhibition would not be seen at all in the UK, or indeed, in their own country. We consider this to be a net loss for all of us.

Artist Biographies

Nonzuzo Gxekwa (b. 1981) is a self-taught photographer from Ladysmith, KwaZulu Natal. Her approach to photography favours the everyday over the spectacular; focusing the camera on what is around her as well as herself. Whether it is through street photography, or portraiture, Nonzuzo’s work is a discovery of human moments in the hustle and bustle of everyday urban life. Her work has been included in group shows of contemporary African photographers, including at the Photographer’s Gallery (Five Contemporary African Photographers, 2021) and in Self-Addressed, a landmark exhibition by Kehinde Wiley and Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles. Her work has been included in group shows of contemporary African photographers, including at the Photographer’s Gallery (Five Contemporary African Photographers, 2021) and in Self-Addressed, a landmark exhibition by Kehinde Wiley and Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles. In 2022 she completed a year-long residency at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht and her work was exhibited at Unseen Amsterdam in 2023.

Thembela Dick (Cape Town, 1986) is a black photographer and filmmaker and LGBTIAQ+ activist. They first studied photography with Zanele Muholi at the Market Photo Workshop (Newtown, Johannesburg) before facilitating numerous media trainings and workshops. In 2017, they co-founded Terra Dick Production (TD/P). Known for their work as a documentarian. Dick’s still photographs for this exhibition are taken from their project - Khwela Ngham - in which they composed intimate portraits and imagery, contrarily documenting the real lifestyle of a queer. With an understanding of classical interpretations of women as beautiful unrealistic and fantastical

creatures, the artist portrays figures categorized as strange in their most normal state, the natural nakedness familiar to all humans.

Troye Alexander (b. 1990) is based in Johannesburg. He was born into and grew up in radical Christian conservative communities for most of his life which directed his views on masculinity, sexuality, relationships and his general world opinion towards more traditional conservative norms. Through his work he challenges his own opinions around these issues and hopes to reform his narrative in order to address his trauma and to come to terms with his identity. Troye took his first photographs at the age of 28 and began experimenting with various forms of film photography and dark room processes. He is drawn to the expanse of techniques that he is able to apply to his work through this medium and in the ways in which the printed image can be presented as unique art objects.

Kwazokuhle Phakathi (b.1998) is a visual artist from Umlazi, Durban. His work explores issues of identity, belonging and space. He aims to explore the complex duality of black queer life in relation to 'community' and the personal journey of self discovery, set in the political landscape that is the South African township. His work is a response to an inner dialogue examining elements of manhood, intimacy, femininity and freedom. Images from Kwazokuhle's ongoing projects Star!bani? and In The Vastness, as well as Almost Everything Has Happened (2022-23) are included in the exhibition.

Soham Joshi (b.2000) is an Indian visual artist living in Brighton, UK. They use alternative photographic techniques to explore urbanity and identity. He is interested in the close connections between people, the photographic material, and the urban environment. Be it the human body or architecture, Soham's work celebrates the forms of the subjects that are being photographed.

Kobi Orion is a West Sussex-based photographer, journalist & creative director. They look at culture, music and fashion through image and text. They also run a conversation platform called 'Kobi Talks'. They make work inspired by and to inspire their generation's creatives, with a focus on the black and queer community.

The exhibition is curated by Pacheanne Anderson, who is an art advisor and curator based in Brighton, with a particular focus on LGBTQI+ and POC artists and Helen Rogers, Director of Koop Projects.

Pacheanne Anderson is a curator, writer and consultant who produces arts and cultural events with the goal of putting Queer, Trans*, Black & POC Artists in spaces where they're more likely to meet collectors, journalists and other artists and curators. Anderson's central focus is to dispel any restrictions and barriers to entry for artists who have previously been underrepresented in the art world through nurturing their practice and art world knowledge outside of institutional frameworks.

KOOP PROJECTS

Koop Projects is an experimental art space in Kemptown, Brighton. Our focus is on contemporary African art and our intention is to start conversations between artists based in Africa and their counterparts in and around Brighton, where we are based. Through our work we emphasise the role of African art and artists as a dynamic source for learning and change, exploring the boundaries between art, craft and design and seeking connections in the places where these practices meet. Our project promotes sustainable art practices through an interrogation of materiality and the contexts in

which artists across Africa make and show their work. We support our local art community through the regular gift of space - offering the gallery to young curators and artists with stories to tell and providing them with a place in which to realise their projects. In the future we hope to bring these conversations to a wider audience through an evolving programme of exhibitions and platforms.

For press inquiries and further information, please contact:

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